3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933,1945)1952
NO6 Comanche NO6

the side of his horse with both hands free for shooting or picking up heavy objects while riding hell bent for leather.[30]

Thus it was that Homer Thrall imaginatively saw the Comanche as "the Arab of the Prairie—the model of the fabled Thessalian 'Centaur,' half horse, half man, so closely joined and so dexterously managed that it appears but one animal, fleet and furious."[31]

Long before they got horses, the Comanches, like their Shoshone cousins, liked to put a good bet on a stick game or an arrow-throwing contest. Small wonder that in later years they took to horse racing with gusto and mighty bets.

In one popular race the contestants started from a line and rushed full speed toward a tree, the one touching it first being the winner. In another they rushed at a pole resting horizontally about six feet from the ground. If a rider stopped his horse a moment too soon, he failed to touch the pole; if a moment too late, the horse passed under the pole, possibly leaving the rider dangling to the pole or thrown to the ground. In still another contest, two strips of buffalo hide were stretched across the track about six to ten feet apart. The starting point was about two hundred yards from the strips. The contestants jumped their mounts over the first strip, reversed their direction, and raced back to the starting point. The horse which failed to get beyond the first strip with all four feet or which went beyond the second lost the race regardless.

Most Comanche racers were "doctored" for a race. An owner had a medicine man chew up some unidentified medicine which he spit in the horse's mouth or ear. Whatever its specific effect, it was power in the Comanche view. No woman could come near a racer when it had had medicine made for it, and after racing, both horse and rider went into a creek to wash off the effects of the medicine.

In many instances horse racing proved to be really profitable business for the Comanches—who were not the least loath to fleece a sucker. Colonel Dodge has left a story of a race which the officers at Fort Chadburne, Texas, to their regret arranged with some Comanches. After the first bets had been laid, the Comanches innocently

[30] R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 331; Marcy, *Exploration of the Red River of Louisiana in the Year 1852*, 103.

[31] H. S. Thrall, *A Pictorial History of Texas*, 445.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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brought forth a miserable-looking pony with a three-inch coat of thick hair and a general appearance of neglect and suffering. Its rider "looked big enough to carry the poor beast on his shoulders" and was armed with a club with which he belabored the animal from starting line to the finish. Yet, to the surprise of the whites the Indian pony managed to win by a neck. Within an hour the officers bit again and lost by a nose. Then they suggested a third race and brought out a magnificent Kentucky racing mare. In a frenzy of excitement the Indians bet everything that the whites would take. With the starting signal the Indian rider threw away his club, gave a whoop, and his little mount "went away like the wind." That Kentucky mare was soon so far behind that for the last fifty yards the Comanche sat backwards on his pony beckoning to the white rider to come on. The whites afterwards learned that the shaggy pony was a celebrated racer, and that the Comanches had just come back from fleecing the Kickapoos to the tune of six hundred ponies with that same little horse.[82]

Straight-run relay races from a standing start for a distance "ten times the distance you can shoot an arrow," or a good two miles, made a favorite run. Shorter obstacle races put both speed and control to a rigorous test.

To the Comanche, then, the horse was an intimate household friend, a beast of burden, a counter in the great prestige game of the warriors, a "gamer," and an occasional source of food. But it was to the buffalo that he turned for his economic mainstay.

The buffalo was as indispensable to the Comanche as the horse. No part of the slaughtered animal was wasted except the rump, spine, and skull. Hair, skin, flesh, blood, bones, entrails, horns, sinews, kidneys, liver, paunch, and the dried excrement were all utilized. The Indian ate its flesh, the marrow of its bones, the contents of the gall bladder on raw liver, and even at times its entrails—a habit left over from Shoshone days. Of the edible parts, only the heart was unconsumed; it was left for magical perpetuation of the herds.

When the Comanche was thirsty and water was not available, there was the blood of the buffalo. Its paunch, after the inner lining was removed, was used as a water bag and also as a container in which

[82] R. I. Dodge, *The Plains of the Great West*, 329–30.

3:Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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lines. The dice consisted of two smooth sticks, each about four inches 524
in length, flat on one side and curved on the other. The flat side was about an inch in width. The player held the two sticks between his thumb and forefinger and either tossed them up or dropped them on a flat stone resting in the center of the playing section. The points scored depended on the section in which the sticks fell. One tally stick for each point was taken from the pile by the winner. The player obtaining the most sticks won the game. The women usually varied the game slightly. They used twelve sticks, from six to ten inches in length. Any stick which fell and remained across another counted a point. The first player to get one hundred points won the game.

Another variation of the game, popular with the women, was played with a shallow wicker bowl or basket and six plum stones or flat pieces of bone.[29] The basket was six to eight inches in diameter, and the dice were marked in a way to make possible several combinations of colors. When several players were participating, each player bet with the opposite player. In making the throw, the basket was raised so as to toss the dice only a few inches high. Before they fell, the basket was brought sharply to the ground. Each player threw in turn. The women chatted and joked continually during the game.

The Comanches, like other Indians, had no moral inhibitions 525
against gambling, so they went all out in their betting. After all, it was only an exchange of property between friends, and generous gift-giving was the custom anyhow. Husbands and wives were free to gamble each other's goods, and each was supposed to pay up the other's debts. Some winners, like Breaks Something, were compassionate, however. On one hunting expedition, according to Breaks Something's story, his band came upon another Comanche group and found some men gambling at dice behind a windbreak. One old man had won nearly everything and was looking for new game. Breaks Something cut in to play against him, putting up the cartridges he had brought for hunting: ten cartridges to a tally stick. He bet and won; bet and won. The old man went broke. He bet twelve hides his wife had not yet tanned. Then he bet her tipi and everything in it. Then his two horses. He lost everything he had. In desperation

[29] Culin, "Games of North American Indians," *loc. cit.*, 54–55, 159.

3: Wallace & Hoebel E-4, 5 (1933, 1945) 1952
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525 he offered to bet his sister. Breaks Something thought this was too much; he refused. The old man's "brother" (a classificatory cousin) broke in, "It's nothing; she's just like a dog." Whereupon Breaks Something agreed to allow twenty-five tally sticks value on the girl. He won her!

Next day Breaks Something sent his mother over to collect the goods he had won: the tipi and the girl, the horses, and everything. The women folk cried and said these were not the old man's to gamble. "I took pity on them," recalled Breaks Something. "I took pity on them and gave everything back to them except the blanket from the old man's back. So I lost my new-won wife."

11: Casagrande E,L-5 (1940) 1954
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

where one might expect to find the greatest proliferation of abstract terms is likewise relatively barren. It reflects a religious fundamentalism preached by parable and illustration. Ideas like resurrection, apostasy, holiness, salvation, and penitence are translated, if at all, by clumsy descriptive phrases or sentences.

Several segments of White culture have received some linguistic elaboration. There are words for fourteen or so breeds of dogs, and the vocabulary of terms for card playing and gambling is fairly rich. Both of these flairs can perhaps be explained in terms of interests already present in the culture. Linton mentions the great preoccupation of the Comanche with the dog,[180] and Steward notes the Shoshone predilection for gambling, common throughout North America, and which was shared by the Comanche.[181] There are a great many words for various diseases and many of these such as the word for diabetes, called *sugar sickness*, evince a good deal of sophistication. Indeed, the diseases the Whites brought and the havoc they wrought could hardly have escaped attention. As one informant said, "Before the Whites came there was nothing but toothache". Mooney mentions smallpox epidemics in 1816 and 1861–62. Cholera was rampant in 1849 and in 1882 measles and whooping cough broke out. Measles again reached epidemic proportions in 1892.[182] At the present time a well-equipped and staffed hospital is available and, in line with the general government health program, some knowledge of medicine is available to the Comanche.

The list of terms omitted from the acculturation vocabulary is perhaps as in-

[180] Ralph Linton, The Study of Man, pp. 428-29 (Appleton-Century, New York; 1936).

[181] Julian H. Steward, Culture Element Distributions: XIII, Nevada Shoshone, Anthropological Records, 4: 2, p. 247 (University of California, 1941).

[182] James Mooney, Calendar History of the Kiowa Indians, 17th Annual Report, BAE (Washington, D. C.; 1898).

[p. 252-A]

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
Oklahoma

vegetables, and seventy-five cents for smoking tobacco and sweets for the children.

Most Indian families lived in meager comfort if the head of the household neither drank nor gambled. Of course, Indians who were compulsive gamblers lowered their families' standard of living also. The gambler's family had a feast-or-famine existence at best.

There is this to be said for gambling money—much of it stayed in the tribe, while money spent for liquor was gone forever. It is easy to understand why decent people deplored the selling of whiskey to these wards of the government.

One recurring incident of Comanche drinking, however, became an amusing interlude to people living close to our store. It occurred in the little inland town of Faxon, Oklahoma Territory, and began immediately after the opening of Comanche land for homesteading in 1901.

The old couple involved in the incident have children, grandchildren, and great-grandchildren living. Let's call the father of the family Old Warrior. He was one of the better-to-do Indians in worldly goods. He had quite a few horses, a few beef cattle, a good hack, a nearly-new small lumber wagon, and good harness, and the family as a whole owned several stock saddles.

But when Old Warrior and his woman came to town for whiskey they never drove. They would ride double on a little, fat, gentle mare, the kind of mount the Indians termed a squaw horse—meaning a safe horse for anyone to ride. It was on such a mount the little folks learned to ride solo. Instead of a saddle, Mr. and Mrs. Old Warrior rode on a blanket, folded so both could sit on it.

Of course the mount was a dead giveaway, as they only used the little mare when they came for whiskey. Another giveaway was that they would arrive in town near dusk, long past the time they would start for home when driving. The first year or two, when not drinking, they would take a roundabout road home. But on whiskey nights, their errand accomplished, they rode straight for home, point to point across the prairie.

Ordinarily they were a friendly family, and once their other errands were attended to, they made our store their stopping place. They always tied their horses to our hitchrack, if there was room. But when on a whiskey trip, they left their friendliness at home and never came to our store. Nor did they enter any other place of business.

For some time there was a vacant store building just to the east

32: Gillis O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
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000 little territorial bank in Cache. His building, which was about sixteen by twenty feet, was divided about half and half by a counter, with a sort of iron wickerwork, or grill, extending above the counter. I couldn't see anyone chasing me, but for all I knew the marshals could have beaten me to town.

I never slacked speed till I reached the bank door. I had never been inside before, but I lit running. Through the door, I began clawing money out of my pockets with both hands and shoving it through the wicker. I didn't know but what the marshals might follow me inside the bank. I told the banker who I was, the reason for my haste, and that I wanted to deposit the money. He had heard something of the ways of the guards at the reservation, and he congratulated me on my escape.

Looking back, remembering the humor I was in, how badly I was scared, I feel that had this wise Indian let me have his revolver, I would have stuck it in the waistband of my pants and, cocky as a rooster, tried to ride out the reservation gate. I knew I had broken no law.

If my guess was right, and if this guard and his partner were waiting for me, I was scared enough to try to use the gun. Someone would 657 have been shot, and it probably would have been me. The marshals were experienced officers. Always their excuse was that they had seen the collector gambling with the Indians or selling whiskey.

657 These subsidized marshals always operated on Indian land, it 452 seemed; and the only recourse was in United States Court--an expensive and long-drawn-out procedure. The collector was never arrested --just relieved of his money, whipped, and ordered off the reservation. We collectors wondered why we never heard of a whiskey peddler being pistol-whipped and having his stock and money taken from him.

273 Whiskey peddlers never showed till dark, and I'm sure the way 439 out I was shown was the ingress and egress of more than one bootlegger. Already, there was a worn path.

657 We were quite aware that a guard was necessary on the reservation while the payment was in progress and for as long as any considerable number of Indians remained camped there. Otherwise, bootleggers and gamblers would have overrun the place. Every sizable post oak tree would have had a blackjack dealer's blanket spread under it.

[452] But there were laws governing these practices. Collecting legiti- mate debts was a different proposition. This restriction was an idea 525 of the licensed trader. It would have taken the army to have stopped

32: Gilles O,X-3 (1902-c.1910) 1974
NO6 Comanche NO6
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many of the Indians from gambling when they had money. But as long as blackjack and three-card monte were dealt by Indians, the money remained in the tribe.

The camp-out on the reservation was dear to the older Indians' hearts. It was a reminder of the wild tribal days after the late summer buffalo hunt—the feasting, visiting, storytelling, gambling, and horse racing. There was no buffalo meat; but they had learned to eat beef, and there was plenty of money to buy it. Likewise, they could indulge in other goodies they had acquired a taste for—and the whiskey peddler came with the darkness each evening.

Mostly the visitors came from faraway tribes—people who didn't have Grass Money payments. They seemed to be old fellows, warrior age. Here, there, and yonder, you would see two old fellows squatted or sitting with their backs against blackjack trees, facing each other and visiting in the sign language. You were sure they were reriding the old war trails.

There was another string to the licensed trader's fiddle. Once an Indian failed to pay his bill to an independent trader, his credit with that merchant was gone. When out of money, he had to trade with the licensed trader. These traders' prices ran a great deal higher, and most Indians wanted to keep out of their clutches.

I got over my scare once the store's money was safe in the bank, and I rode back to the reservation. My memory is that I had seen about all of the Indians owing large accounts, and I had only the odds and ends to clean up. I never saw the marshal again that afternoon. I rode in home, eighteen miles, that night, starting after dark. Perhaps I should add that most adults with sense, large merchants from Lawton and surrounding towns, and the moneylenders set up camp in the section line outside the reservation gate. There they could catch the Indians going and coming.

Some readers may read a different meaning into the word *reservation* than I have in mind in this story. I use it here in the sense of land held back, reserved from allotment and homesteading, when the area was opened for settlement in 1901. There were three of these tracts, containing two or three sections each. One was at Fort Sill, one at Anadarko, and one just southwest of Cache. There was a licensed trading store on each tract, and the land was the property of the Indians. Reservation was the name in general use for these areas. The